

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8266

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 7250

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: REACTION TO UNIVERSITY INTERVENTION

1. SUMMARY. REACTION OF STUDENT AND FACULTY ACTIVISTS TO THE GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BUENOS AIRES HAS THUS FAR BEEN MUTED. THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IS DECIDEDLY RIGHT WING HOWEVER AND WHILE IT MAY BE ABLE TO KEEP THE LID ON THINGS FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE IT PROMISES NEITHER A SOLUTION TO THE UNIVERSITY'S PROBLEM NOR DOES IT GIVE MUCH HOPE OF A RETURN TO NORMALCY. END SUMMARY.

2. IN THE WEEK THAT HAS FOLLOWED THE INTERVENTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BUENOS AIRES (UBA), REACTION OF STUDENT AND FACULTY ACTIVISTS HAS FOR SEVERAL REASONS BEEN MUTED. SINCE UBA WAS SUDDENLY CLOSED ON SEP 17 THE STUDENTS HAVE NATURALLY NOT HAD THE CHANCE TO GATHER ON CAMPUS WHERE THEY COULD EASILY START A PROTEST AGAINST THE INTERVENTION. THIS CLOSURE HAS NOW BEEN EXTENDED ANOTHER WEEK UNTIL OCT 1 AND THE FEAR IS THAT IT MAY RUN MUCH LONGER.

3. AS IS THE CURRENT PRACTICE WITH RESPECT TO VIRTUALLY ALL DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST GOA POLICIES, PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE INTERVENTION HAVE NOT BEEN PERMITTED. ONE SCHEDULED FOR SEP 24 IN FRONT OF THE CONGRESS WAS BANNED BY THE POLICE. OF THOSE FEW STUDENTS WHO TRIED TO PROTEST ANYWAY, 33 WERE ARRESTED.

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4. THE NEW INTERVENTOR HAS THUS FAR MOVED FAIRLY SLOWLY IN MAKING

HIS APPOINTMENTS AND HAS MADE NO STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS
CONCERNING FUTURE POLICIES.

5. IN RECENT WEEKS THE UNITY OF THE NUMEROUS STUDENT GROUPS
HAD FRACTURED DUE TO DIFFERENCES OF OPINION REGARDING THE QUESTION
OF HOLDING A PLEBISCITE, THE RESUMPTION OF ARMED STRUGGLE BY THE
MONTONEROS AND OTHER ISSUES. FOR THIS REASON, THE LEFTIST PERONISTS
(JUP) WHO CONTROLLED THE RECTORSHIP AND MOST OF THE ELEVEN
SCHOOLS WITHIN UBA HAD LOST SUPPORT. IN ADDITION THERE WAS A
GENERAL WEARINESS ON THE PART OF VIRTUALLY ALL SEGMENTS OF THE
UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY WITH THE SITUATION AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF
THE FACT THAT GOA ACTION AGAINST THE JUP, WHO SUPPORT THE
MONTONEROS, WAS INEVITABLE.

6. COMMENT. THE NEW UBA ADMINISTRATION WHICH OTTALAGANO HEADS
REPRESENTS A SHIFT FROM ONE EXTREME (THE JUP) TO THE OTHER.
EMBASSY CONTACTS MOST OFTEN USE THE WORDS ULTRANATIONALISTIC,
CATHOLIC AND FACIST IN DESCRIBING IT. INDEED, SOME UCR AND
UNIVERSITY SOURCES HAVE DESCRIBED AT LEAST ONE OF THE NEW DEANS
AS AN OUT-AND-OUT NAZI. THE FEW APPOINTMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN
MADE APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN BASED ON IDEOLOGICAL COMPATIBILITY
RATHER THAN MERIT. MOST, IN OTHER WORDS, HAVE BEEN SO FAR TO THE
RIGHT AS OTTALAGANO HIMSELF. WHILE THE GOA, EITHER THROUGH
INDECISION OR STRATEGY, HAD WAITED TO INTERVENE UNTIL RESISTANCE
WAS LOW, THERE IS THE RISK THAT THE MYRIAD STUDENT GROUPS WILL BE
BROUGHT BACK TOGETHER BY THE ONE THING THAT CAN UNITE THEM--
THEIR OPPOSITION TO AN UNPOPULAR RIGHTWING UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION.
AT THIS EARLY POINT, THEREFORE, IT APPEARS THAT WHILE THE NEW
UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION MAY BE ABLE TO HOLD THE LID ON THINGS
FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE IT PROMISES NEITHER A SOLUTION TO THE
UNIVERSITY'S PROBLEMS NOR DOES IT GIVE MUCH HOPE OF A RETURN
TO NORMALCY.
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